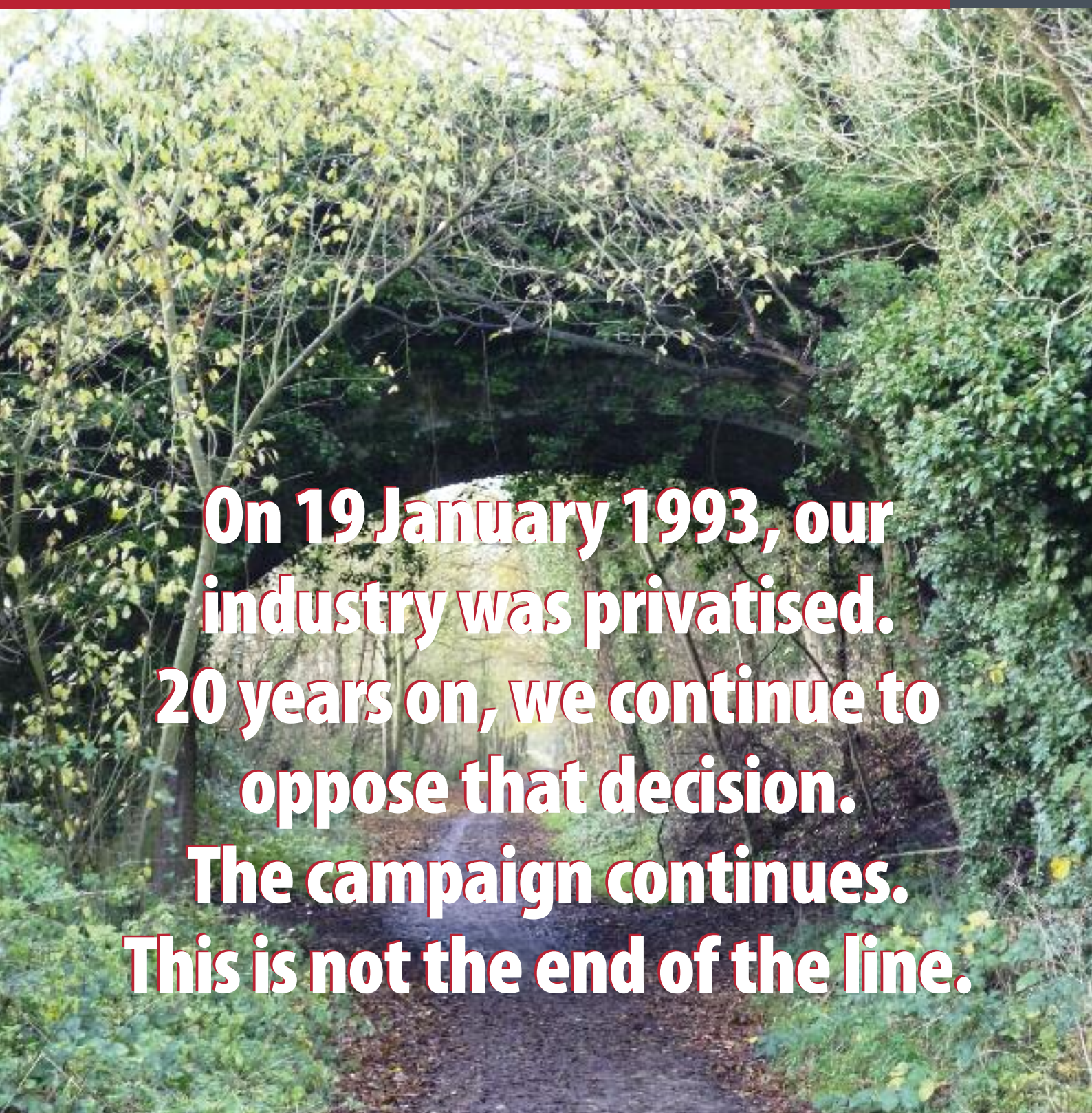




ASLEF

PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN

JOURNAL
JANUARY 2013



**On 19 January 1993, our
industry was privatised.
20 years on, we continue to
oppose that decision.
The campaign continues.
This is not the end of the line.**

11 **Elections:** Should
voting be mandatory?

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who broke the mould

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JOURNAL
JANUARY 2013



Hope springs, but defences are ready ...

A New Year is traditionally a time of hope and optimism. There are certainly a number of things I'm hoping for.

A new government for starters. This coalition has masqueraded for too long as a decent set of chaps concerned for the common good. They're not. The Tories are as class-oriented as they have ever been, toadying to their chums in the city and the backwoods and having no contact with, or interest in, working people. They remain intent on us paying for the recklessness of the rich, especially the bankers, who keep picking up obscenely high rewards for failure. And while the Lib Dems pretend to be considerate and caring, they have gone along with everything the Tories have proposed. They want the limousines and the ministries, but not the responsibilities of power.

I hope the campaign we have led against the McNulty proposals will force the government to look again at the stupidity of simply cutting costs in the existing system, and instead rid our industry of the folly of franchising. We hear that senior managers in the currently publicly-run East Coast mainline are coming under pressure to play down their successes because they are making private train operators look bad!

I hope our jobs will be secure in all our sectors and that the government will realise their withdrawal of Criminal Injury compensation for our grades is unfair and unreasonable. I hope that they will also stop hammering away at trade union rights. We represent decent working men and women. The fact is, this government seems to think anyone who didn't go to public school is their enemy.

These are some of the things I hope for. But I won't leave it there. I'll also ensure that our union is well-organised and prepared to defend its members if attacks on us and our industry continue into 2013. We don't just wish you a Happy New Year. We prepare for it.

Mick Whelan,
General Secretary



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**More than
just a union**



Stations close as Kings Cross fire is remembered

Relatives of those who died in the fire at King's Cross Underground station on 18 November 1987 were joined by fire-fighters and union members to remember the 31 who died when a fire on a wooden escalator engulfed the London station.

Mick Whelan said, 'This is a time for mourning and honouring the dead,' he said. 'But part of that process is to determine that nothing like this must happen on our railways ever again. We must never be complacent.'

Mick wrote last month to Boris Johnson expressing ASLEF's concern that proposed public spending cuts of nearly £65 million could mean the closure of

30 fire stations across London 'with significant consequences for public safety and the health and safety of transport workers'. He urged the Mayor to conduct a meticulous risk assessment of the impact of such cuts.

'The anniversary of the King's Cross fire is a reminder of the vital role the Fire Service plays in supporting the health and safety of transport workers,' Mick said.

The Mayor has replied in non-committal fashion, saying he had not finalised the overall budget for the GLA Group because of the 'considerable uncertainty over the level of government funding which might be available.'

£25,000 reward after Inverkeilor derailment

We reported last month on the deliberate derailment of a passenger train at Inverkeilor in Angus. Now the industry has offered a £25,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible.

The CrossCountry 08:04 service between Edinburgh and Aberdeen was travelling at 76 mph when it came off the rails on 4 November. The British Transport Police (BTP) says an obstruction was deliberately placed on the tracks.

The reward is offered by CrossCountry, ScotRail and East Coast. None of the 36 passengers were hurt, but the 49-year-old driver suffered a minor head knock and was treated by ambulance crews.

Det Insp Kevin McCormack, of BTP, said, 'It is hoped that by offering such a substantial reward someone will come forward with information that can help identify those believed to be responsible for such an irresponsible act.'

BOMBARDIER GETS VIRGIN CONTRACT

Train-maker Bombardier has won a £106m contract to maintain Virgin trains on the West Coast Main Line. This extends a current deal to 2016, with work mainly carried out at its depot in Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, where it employs 360 people.

CompanyNews

DBS IM PAY

An offer has been accepted for 2012 which will mean

- An effective increase of 3.50% on basic salaries and allowances for DBS IM Traincrew grades, effective from 1 July 2012, with the exclusion of free day working hourly rates which will remain frozen at current rates until 31 December 2013.
- An increase in Lodging Allowance for DBS IM Traincrew grades from £15 to £16.50 effective from 1 July 2012.
- All current DBS IM Traincrew grades who have an annual leave entitlement of less than 28 days would move to an annual leave entitlement of 28 days per annum and the current stepped arrangements would be revised.

GRAND CENTRAL

An offer has been accepted for 2012 and 2013 which will mean

- An increase in basic rates of pay of 3.5% from 12th February 2012
- An increase in basic rates of pay by the November 2012 RPI + 0.5% from 1st January 2013 or a minimum of 3% (whichever is greater)
- Arriva group travel concessions
- Implementation of new staff representation
- Commitment to look at productivity going forward

COMPANY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

East Midlands Trains: Bro. A. Botham (Derby) and Sister R. Peterson (St. Pancras) were elected as ASLEF nominees for three years.

London Underground: Bro. W. Larman (Watford) and Bro. C. Hayes (Euston) were elected as ASLEF nominees for three years.

East Coast: Bro. M. Carroll (Kings Cross) was elected to a casual vacancy as an ASLEF nominee until next September.

Merseyrail: Bro P Cashman (Birkenhead) Bro W P Hart (Kirkdale) and Bro W Baxter (Southport) were elected as ASLEF nominees until December 2015.

Southeastern: Bro S Burgess (Tonbridge) Bro W Williams (Faversham) and Bro A Hussein (Grove Park) were elected as ASLEF nominees until December 2015.

First Scotrail: Bro A Fergusson (Yoker) Bro A McCallum (Ayr) Bro I Smith (Glasgow) and Bro M Fraser, (Edinburgh No. 2) were elected as ASLEF nominees until December 2015.

REST DAY WORKING

First Transpennine Express: Sanctioned until the end of 2012.

Chiltern Railways: Sanctioned until 23 February 2013.

First Capital Connect: Sanctioned until end of 2012

Hull Trains: Sanctioned until 23 February 2013

LAW CHANGE ON SCRAP METAL

Croydon MP Richard Ottaway has successfully negotiated a Private Members Bill through the House of Commons aimed at helping to eradicate the effects of metal theft crimes on Britain's railways. His Scrap Metal Dealers Bill has now passed to the House of Lords.

It is estimated that the cost to the UK economy of metal theft is hundreds of millions of pounds a year – and rising because of the increase in the price of metals, particularly copper and lead.

Mick Whelan says he is pleased at the move as 'metal thieves cause disruption to passengers and enormous costs the industry'.

Rail protests over the UK

'Happy Christmas. Fare increases.' That was the message rail unions delivered at railway stations across the country last month as part of the ASLEF-backed TUC 'Action for Rail' campaign. Union activists spoke to commuters and handed out leaflets warning of the fare increases that will hit commuters in the New Year. Meanwhile, the train companies will be handing out dividends to shareholders as well as picking up public subsidies – so commuters get whacked twice.

Action for Rail points out that the government, rather than tackle high fares, wants to give companies longer franchises and more freedom to

- Increase fares
- Close ticket offices
- Cut thousands of staff at stations and on trains
- Cut services and cram more passengers onto trains
- Take off critical safety work like maintenance and signalling.

Passengers were urged to contact their MPs to demand a rail service that

- Limits rail fares to inflation
- Keeps guards and catering staff on trains
- Keeps ticket offices open
- Invests in trains to provide seats for all; and
- Keeps Network Rail in the 'not



Seasonal gimmicks, but the same message from the RMT's Sean Hoyle, London Assembly Member Andrew Dismore, Mick Whelan and his fellow general secretary, the TSSA's Manuel Cortes



Executive Committee member Howard Kaye gets the union's point across

for profit' sector. 'I'd like to thank all ASLEF members who turned out to make these points on a bitterly cold morning,' said general



Would you refuse a leaflet from Scots reps Alec McCallum and Ian Smith?

secretary Mick Whelan, who was outside Euston Station. 'It is in all our interests to work for a railway network that is safe, efficient and accessible.'

WEEK-DAY DBS RUNS TO ITALY

DB Schenker has improved railfreight operations between the UK and Italy with the introduction of an additional weekly service between Hams Hall in the Midlands and Domodossola in northern Italy.

Previously there had been three return services a week between the UK and Italy.

A fifth service between Hams Hall and Domodossola will be introduced within the next couple of months, which will mean a first-ever weekday freight service between the two countries.

ARMITT TO LEAD LABOUR REVIEW

John Armit is to head Labour's panel of advisers who will carry out a review of Britain's infrastructure needs for the party. Chosen by Lord Adonis for the role, Sir John was the chief executive of Railtrack and its successor, Network Rail.

500 CLUB

The winning number of the November draw was 89 and the prize money of £250 was scooped by Tony Barter, reports Alan Taylor of the retired members section. The December winner was a collective - District Council No2 won £288 with the winning number 109.

District 4 hosted a superb Christmas lunch on 7 December at the Doncaster Trades Club. Well over 100 guests were addressed by the General Secretary and other speakers including Ed Miliband. The Labour leader spoke of the need to re-examine the franchising system on the railway and said that the Labour Party would 'not rule out' any alternative forms of ownership.

He also paid tribute to James Stribley, the GMB Remploy convenor in

Sheffield who gave a powerful account of the government's attack on disabled workers and the effects that the closure of Remploy factories will have on the workforce.

A collection raised over £700 to help the Remploy workers in their fight.



Ed Miliband speaking at the packed event in Doncaster

Mick Whelan presented the Labour Leader with a memento of the occasion

Scots signal box review

Historic Scotland and rail operator Network Rail are surveying signal boxes in order to ensure that the best examples in Scotland are preserved and protected.

Modernisation of signalling systems will see 80% of old style mechanical boxes in the UK taken out of use over the next 10 to 15 years.

Boxes dating from the 1800s through to the end of World War



The signal box at Clachnaharry in Inverness dates from 1890

It survive, with some still in use.

Historic Scotland said examples included a rare stone-built box at Aberdour in Fife and a box at Biggar, South Lanarkshire, that is thought to be one of only three known surviving examples of

a Caledonian Railway Company box.

Other boxes of interest to the public body include two timber-built McKenzie & Holland boxes at Nairn from 1891, and one built in 1890 at Clachnaharry, Inverness.

Retired driver compensated for asbestos cancer

A train driver who was exposed to asbestos by his employers has received substantial compensation after being diagnosed with a devastating lung disease. Robin Gould from Westbury, Wiltshire was diagnosed with mesothelioma just a year ago after suffering from breathlessness.

Doctors have told the 73-year-old retired ASLEF member that there is no cure for the

disease, which was caused by exposure to asbestos while he was working as a fireman, cleaner and then driver for British Railways. Asbestos was used to lag boilers and cylinders and between casings on the trains, and Driver Gould, who worked on the railways for 55 years, was never provided with protection from the dust, nor warned about the dangers to his health.

Thompsons Solicitors, working for the union, settled his claim out of court. It included a payment of £2,000 towards his care at Dorothy House Hospice Care, a charity based near Bradford-on-Avon. Mr Gould said, 'Dorothy House Hospice has provided me with a great deal of care during the last few months and I felt it was important that they were recompensed for their work.'

Training for equality

Steven Andre says he was 'one of the mess room debaters who had never attended a branch meeting in 14 years of being in the driving grade'. Then two years ago his Norwood Junction branch asked him to become an equal opportunities rep. This led to him attending last month's Branch Equal Opportunities Reps training course. He sent us this report ...

I was surprised by the number of new faces I saw at the event that was held at the Marx Memorial library near the ASLEF head office - 75 equality reps nationally around half attended the course. We had a humorous welcome from general secretary Mick Whelan. 'I'm the typical ASLEF union official and member,' he said. 'White, heterosexual, male and bald!' It set the relaxed tone for the rest of the day.

Each speaker in turn spoke with passion about the role of equality reps role, and none more so than the Chairs of the union's representative committees for LGBT, BME and women members. They explained the work they did and the kind of issues we could



Victoria Phillips explains the terms of the Equality Act

expect in the workplace.

Lee James, ASLEF's Equality Advisor, said the role of a branch equal opportunity rep was to be the first point of contact for equality-related issues and to give feedback to representative committee members. National Organiser Simon Weller said the union is now considering expanding the role of the equality rep, something I feel we should welcome.

Victoria Phillips from Thompson Solicitors highlighted the protections of The Equality Act 2010, which the current government is intent on watering down. In times of economic downturn, discrimination always raises its ugly head.

I came away realising that equality reps don't just work for



Making up for 14 quiet years!

women, LGBT and BME members. We exist to advise any branch member who feels discriminated against or harassed because of their age, religion, or hidden disabilities such as dyslexia. As keynote speaker Maria Exall said, 'If we are divided, we become weaker.'

Union reacts to CICA withdrawal

The general secretary has written to TOCs, FOCs, London Underground, the Office of Rail Regulation and to Network Rail to say that because of the government decision to withhold Criminal Injury compensation for drivers involved in fatalities, ASLEF believes that train drivers should no longer have to search the track for bodies following an incident.

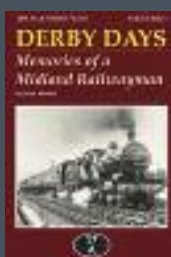
Mick argued that our members would be putting themselves at risk of suffering life-changing trauma following a criminal act, with no recognition of this outcome. 'Our position now is that it is the responsibility of the infrastructure provider to ensure that the track is clear of bodies, and not the train driver.'

Durham gala seeks sponsors

The Durham Miners' Gala will be 142 years old next year and its organisers are asking people to become 'Friends of the Gala' by donating £2 or more a month by standing order. Friends will receive a glossy magazine with photographs of the Gala and a report of the speeches each year.

'It has survived numerous strikes, lockouts, depressions, two world wars and the destruction of our coalfields,' the organisers point out, adding that the cost of organising the Gala increases each year, while the finances of the Durham Miners' Association diminish.

The Friends affiliation form is online at [www.tuc.org.uk/tucfiles/454/Durham Miners' Gala Friends.pdf](http://www.tuc.org.uk/tucfiles/454/Durham%20Miners%20Gala%20Friends.pdf)



DRIVER WESTON WRITES BOOK – AT 90!

Eamonn Tague, secretary of our Derby branch, tells us that one of the branch's most senior citizens – John Weston, who is in his 90s, has just written a book about his life and career on the footplate.

The publishers, Oakwood Press say it is 'the story of an engineman, with all the highs and lows of a journey through a career spanning the hard times of the 1930s, World War II, post-war austerity, nationalization and ultimately the demise of the steam locomotive.'

Their telephone number is 01291 650444 and their email is

sales@oakwoodpress.co.uk for anyone who might like to purchase John's 208-page book for £15.95.



Whatever life throws at you ASLEF will help to protect you.

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- Industrial disease or illness
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- Free will writing service
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- Employment law accessed through your ASLEF district organiser

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Stephen Lawrence mother at District One Council

District 1 Council met in the Marx Memorial Library, a non-descript red-doored building standing on Clerkenwell Green, near the union's head office. The director of archives, John Callow, welcomed us to the historic building where Lenin produced his newspaper from 1902 to 1903 and spoke of the area's radical past.

The highlight of the day was the inspirational Mrs Doreen Lawrence OBE, mother of racially murdered Stephen Lawrence. Her moving account of how she moved from

grieving mother to campaigner to Olympic flag bearer will live with everyone there. She said she wanted to die when she heard of Stephen's murder, but instead she began a long journey for justice. In the course of that, she has helped to bring about important changes to the law, not least double jeopardy, which allowed Gary Dobson and David Norris to be found guilty of Stephen's murder.

In 2008 she set up the Stephen Lawrence charitable trust, to encourage people from diverse backgrounds to train to become architects, which was Stephen's ambition. She said, 'It is important to educate our children; this is the armour to protect them. By learning to do better, we do better.'



A truly memorable council meeting with Stephen Lawrence's mother centre stage

She was followed by Dr Richard Baxell, who gave an excellent presentation on the history of the International Brigade.

It will be difficult to follow this meeting next year, and it is with

great thanks to those who made this all possible.

● **Thanks to Daniel Bound, Secretary, Norwood Junction branch for this report**

High flyers at District Six Westminster meeting

Last month's District 6 Council welcomed a number of speakers to introduce a series of lively discussions.

Shadow transport secretary Maria Eagle insisted that 'the status quo isn't an option' for UK rail, and reminded the council that Labour was calling for the East Coast Main Line to remain in public hands, saying directly operated railways (DOR) had delivered half a billion of premium payments to the taxpayer.

Labour peer and former TUC General Secretary Lord Monks outlined how the financial services sector and credit has come to dominate the UK at the expense of manufacturing and production while Aidee Moreno of the Colombian Agricultural Workers Union outlined the current situation in her country. Richard Hebditch from the Campaign for Better Transport's contribution gave an update on the organisation's current work



District 6 met in the imposing surrounds of the House of Commons Wellington Room

programme.

Martin Frobisher, Network Rail's Route Managing Director for the East Midlands, gave a detailed presentation on the current infrastructure development programme planned for the region over the next seven years. He said the £500 million upgrade of the Midland Main line would create a 'virtuous circle' of environmental benefits and operating cost savings which would free up significant capacity for freight. Significantly for ASLEF members he also said that all foot crossings on



Angela Eagle with EC member Dave Calfe and district organiser Dicky Fisher

the line would be removed by the end of the project.

Jack Dromey spoke about the frustration many of his constituents felt over the conduct of London Midland and insisted that Labour needs to focus on the 'core areas' of house building, investment in infrastructure and the decline in living standards.

Mick Whelan closed the meeting of the district where he used to serve as its national officer with an update on franchising, the Rail Delivery group and other developments.

Scottish council hears all the angles

A meeting of the union's District 2, which was held in the Scottish Parliament building, took the opportunity to hear from senior opinion-formers across the political spectrum.

Richard Baker MSP – who is the regional member for North East Scotland and Scottish Labour's transport spokesman – welcomed the opportunity to engage with ASLEF members and highlighted the importance of trade union views.

Richard expressed caution about longer franchises and underlined Labour's opposition

to the cuts to the Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Plan budget.

The council also heard from former Transport Minister and SNP MSP for Banff and Buchan Steward Stephenson. He outlined his belief that Scotland's railways would be better in an independent Scotland (which provoked some interesting discussion!) while Conservative Transport Spokesman and Regional MSP for North East Scotland Alex Johnstone generated further debate as he expressed his support for the current rail industry structure and the Government's



Richard Baker, Labour's Scottish transport spokesman addressed the union's district council north of the border

austerity programme.

STUC Assistant General Secretary Stephen Boyd offered a detailed economic critique while the co-convenor of the Scottish Green Party and Member of the Scottish Parliament for the Glasgow



Mick Whelan closes a highly charged meeting at the Scottish Parliament

region, Patrick Harvie MSP, highlighted his party's commitment to sustainable transport before ASLEF General Secretary Mick Whelan closed the meeting with a political and industrial overview.

JFC plays key role in Colombia peace process

Justice For Colombia (JFC), the union campaign to which ASLEF is affiliated, which has been at the forefront of supporting trade unionists in Colombia is now playing a key role in the peace process.

For some time, JFC has been supporting the efforts of Colombian trade unions, human rights and community groups to bring about peace with social justice. In a country where thousands of trade unionists have been murdered, peace is desperately needed. The conflict has caused over five million people to flee their homes because of violence, there have been around 3,000 trade unionists killed, there are 7,000 political prisoners and over 57,000 people have forcibly 'disappeared'. It is one of the biggest human rights crises in the world.

On 19 November, peace talks between the FARC guerrillas and the Colombian government officially began after months of secret exploratory talks. ASLEF tabled an emergency motion calling for a role for civil society in the peace process which was passed unanimously at last year's Labour Party Conference.



The delegation attracted a lot of attention in Colombia – which was the point of the exercise!



Trade unionists, peasant leaders and indigenous activists travelled miles to come and give testimony to the delegation about abuses in the region of Cauca, in the Colombian countryside

While Colombian unions have welcomed the talks, there was criticism that the government was refusing to allow civil society participation in the negotiations, and has refused to agree to a bilateral ceasefire during the talks. After national and international pressure, the government agreed to a forum to be held in late December for the first agenda point – land – to be discussed by civil society, and for their proposals to be taken to the negotiating table. Unions insist that civil society participation must be increased and constant throughout the talks. They also want the process to address the root cause of the conflict – which is social inequality. According to a recent UN survey, Colombia is the third most unequal country in the world.

EXPERIENCE FROM IRELAND

JFC has been building on the experience of the Northern Ireland peace process by bringing together a cross-party group of politicians and trade unionists involved in their peace process to support the process in Colombia.

From 4 - 9 November, JFC led a group to Colombia which included politicians from Sinn Féin, Democratic Unionists (DUP), Ulster Unionists (UUP), and Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) as well as three Northern Ireland trade union leaders. The delegation was received at the highest level in Colombia and had a huge impact.

Delegates met President Santos and the government negotiating team to discuss the talks and press for civil society involvement. JFC arranged for delegates to address the plenary sessions of the Colombian Congress – speeches which were broadcast live on television.

The group also met with trade unions, human rights organisations, victims' groups, released FARC hostages, visited political prisoners, and travelled to northern Cauca – described as the 'epicentre of the conflict' – to hear testimony from locals of



Delegates with leaders of the Patriotic March – a new opposition movement of trade unions, students, peasants and indigenous organisations



Delegates with the leaders of Colombian trade union movement



'Mothers of Soacha' whose sons were murdered by army soldiers with members of the delegation after giving testimony

human rights abuses.

The Northern Ireland delegation shared their experiences of their own peace process in different meetings throughout the week, including addressing a seminar attended by members of the congressional peace commission and military generals. The significance of having a group of people who, as they themselves said, 'would not have sat side by side 20 years ago', was enormous.

CEASE-FIRE MUST BE A PRECONDITION

The cross-party group continually highlighted the difficulty of conducting negotiations without a bilateral ceasefire in place saying, 'We believe that those working for peace such as the Patriotic March and Colombians for Peace must be given every guarantee from the state that they will be able to participate in

the process and carry out political activity free from persecution, death threats, stigmatisation or imprisonment.'

The visit was covered intensely by the Colombian media and feedback from the Colombian Congress highlighted that the visit had already changed the attitude of some far-right politicians towards the peace process.

On the first day of peace talks, the FARC announced a unilateral ceasefire.

The trip has placed JFC at the heart of international support for the peace process and it was publicly congratulated in the Congress by opposition leaders. It is well placed to continue the peace campaign, building support in Northern Ireland, the EU and the US. We wish them every success.

For more information on how to support JFC please visit www.justiceforcolombia.org

Learning from Kings Cross success

As ASLEF Union Learner Reps we work with ASLEF members and with individuals from other grades, other trade unions and those who aren't yet in any union. We help people get back on the learning ladder - learning new skills or improving existing ones. As drivers we all know that a mistake or a medical condition could mean our driving days are over, so having up-to-date qualifications as an insurance policy can only be a positive thing.

For us, learning covers a broad spectrum – it doesn't just mean sitting in a classroom, although it can include that. Since 2009 we have staged two learning events a year at Kings Cross; one as part of the national Adult Learners Week in the spring and another for the Family Learning Festival in the autumn. At these events we cover a wide range of interests and our latest one was no exception. We had many different taster workshops ranging from 'getting on the web' and 'email for beginners' through to Tai Chi, Shiatsu and Reiki. There were stalls for card making, digital photo imaging, and information on ITQs and English and Maths courses.

This was our first opportunity to showcase our new Learning Resource Centre, and we not only had the support of East Coast Trains and ASLEF project worker Julie Stedman, but also the welcome backing of EC Member for District 5 Howard Kaye, ASLEF District Organiser Nigel Gibson, and Kings Cross Drivers' Company Council Rep Mick Carroll.

ASLEF's Equality Department came along to give the facts on the Equality Act, and we had representatives from the Workers Educational Association, Stephenson College, the Transport Credit Union and Macmillan Cancer Support. Plus plenty of teas, coffees and sandwiches on hand.

One of our most popular attractions at every event is the Driving Simulator. Those who want a go are generally either from other grades or drivers' family members, so as well as being educational it's useful in encouraging a diversity of people into the grade.

While our main focus group is East Coast Trains staff, we try to help any railway colleagues interested in the courses we run. We'd also like to hear from other ASLEF ULRs interested in setting up joint courses. It's dead easy to contact us:

Jim Peters / Mick O'Shea, ASLEF Union Learner Representatives, East Coast Trains, Room 222 East Side Offices, King's Cross Station, LONDON, N1C 4AP email: aslefulrsatkgx@gmail.com Twitter: ASLEFULRsAtKGX Facebook: ASLEF ULRs At KgX M: 07901 977 758 – Mick O'Shea M: 07786 310 471 – Jim Peters



Stewart Pritchard, Emma Penman and Richie Roberts looking very spritely at the conference!

Wales TUC Learning was an education!

says **Stew Pritchard**, ULR at our Cardiff Branch

I was excited and somewhat apprehensive on my journey to attend the 11th Annual TUC Union Learning Rep (ULR) Conference in Wales because this was my first TUC conference since becoming ULR for the Cardiff Branch.

After registering for workshops I was ushered to a large conference hall where I was joined by Emma Penman, Project Worker for ASLEF Education, and fellow driver and ULR, Richie Roberts from Holyhead.

Jeff Cuthbert AM, the Deputy Minister for Education and Skills began with a fantastic speech about the great work of ULRs across Wales and reiterating how much money, time and effort the Welsh Assembly are channelling into learning and skills for the workplace.

Following speakers included Sian Cartwright from the Welsh TUC, David Kendall from the Six Book Challenge, Phil Tamlyn from Unison and the broadcaster and writer Jocelyn Andrews, who gave an inspirational talk about achieving goals and aspirations.

Marcus Griffiths from Computer Recyclers was on hand with information about low cost computing and education stations for the workplace and home - something I shall be looking into for my work colleagues.

On day two Marion Burke from the Wales TUC outlined the courses on offer for ULRs and David Sullivan, from ELEVATE Cymru, described the three University networks that offer e-learning and face to face courses. David Simpson from the Network of Excellence then talked about ideas for web-based and people-based networks, and Union Learn spokeswoman Louisa Smith described the newly customised climbing frame Pilot.

I learnt a lot from listening to and sharing stories with other ULRs. I strongly believe that this will help with my personal development - as a new ULR within ASLEF and the Welsh TUC.

Swansea promotes learning

On October 16 an Open Day was held at Swansea station to promote Union Learning. Project Worker Emma Penman, First Great Western ULR Ted Lewellyn and Arriva Trains Wales ULR Gary Hughes were there to represent ASLEF.

Employees of both companies had the opportunity to meet and chat with professionals from the Wales TUC, the Workers Educational Association and Associated Community Training.

There was also the opportunity to enrol on a wide variety of Learn Direct distance



At the Swansea event were Gary Hughes (ATW) and Ted Llewellyn (FGW)

learning courses. Several people took advantage of this, signing up for courses such as Welsh, German and the European Computer Driving Licence.

The day was a great success,

and will hopefully pave the way for future events involving both TOCs.

● **Report from Gary Hughes, Arriva Trains Wales, Carmarthen**

Should we have to vote?



The voting age is likely to be reduced from 18 to 16 for the ballot on Scottish independence which is to be held in 2014, but it is not the only area where voting reform is being debated. The

Scottish TUC recently began to examine the case for mandatory voting. Is there a case for insisting that people use their vote, or would this infringe personal liberties? ASLEF's officer in Scotland, Kevin Lindsay, says his personal view is in favour of mandatory voting. We asked him to explain the arguments ...

I believe that it should be mandatory to vote. I can't see the problem, to be honest. If people choose to spoil their paper, they can do so. And let's not forget that following the introduction of the poll tax several hundreds of thousands of people disappeared from the electoral register to avoid a measure they felt was unfair, and many of them have never had the right to vote in any election since.

It also distorts democracy to announce a victory for candidates who earn the support of a tiny minority of the electorate. The recent elections for Police Commissioners make the point. The turnout was 15% in some areas, so the winners had the backing of less than one in ten potential voters! This is hardly a democratic mandate!

So what is the case for mandatory voting – where if people eligible to vote failed to do so, they would face punitive measures such as fines or community service?

○ Mandatory voting ensures that the candidate of the party that wins represents a majority of the population, which is surely the point and aim of democracy. It means that governments can't ignore sections of society that are less politically active.

○ Mandatory voting may have the positive advantage of encouraging voters to take more

interest in the politicians they can vote for. If they have to cast a vote, rather than simply opting out, they will feel more involved – which would lead to a better informed population.

○ At the moment, parties and individuals spend vast sums of money trying to encourage people to go to their polling booths (or voting by post). If they didn't need to do this, it would reduce the role of money in politics.

○ If voters don't back any of the candidates, they are not obliged to vote for someone they don't like. They can simply leave their ballot form empty, or spoil their paper. At least this shows they are dissatisfied rather than just apathetic.

○ Mandatory voting makes it much more difficult for extremist groups to get into power. With the current 'vote if you like' system, extreme parties can organise a small section of people to vote for them and get themselves into the political process. (The fascist BNP's Nick Griffin was elected a member of the European Parliament when he won 6.2% of votes cast – in an election where only 34.7% of those eligible bothered to vote).

○ If everybody is obliged to vote, any problems in the system are identified and steps such as postal voting or holding elections at weekends can be introduced. It lessens any possibility of anyone

being intimidated or prevented from voting.

○ If there are high levels of participation, this reduces the risk of political instability created by autocratic leaders.

I accept that there are arguments against mandatory voting and to be fair I will list them – even though I think they're wrong! Those against would say

○ Voting is a civic right (something you can do) rather than a civic duty (something you have to do). To be forced to vote affects the freedom of an individual.

○ Mandatory voting can infringe certain rights. For example, most Jehovah's Witnesses believe that they should not participate in political events, so mandatory voting infringes their freedom of religious practice (although I'd point out that they would be allowed to use a blank vote).

○ People without any interest or knowledge about politics may vote so that they fulfill legal requirements. To vote when you are ignorant of the issues is not democracy, and it could affect the electoral process.

○ Forcing people to vote does not mean they become more engaged in the political process. It would be better to put resources into educating the public and encouraging political conversation. (Although I'd say we could do both, and that



The debate on mandatory voting is underway in Scotland

mandatory voting would encourage this process).

○ The cost of policing and financing this system would be huge and could cost the tax-payer money.

I think if we look long and hard at the arguments on both sides, the case for mandatory voting is overwhelming. I think it is a sham to say, 'I speak for my constituents,' when you know you have the backing of a tiny minority. At the very minimum, if everyone voted, you would know they had all heard of you! And finally, hundreds of thousands of people have died to ensure that you have the right to vote. The least you can do is use it.



Scotland is proposing to reduce the voting age to 16 for the ballot on independence

NUTS, HEALTH, SAFETY AND YOU



WE'VE all chuckled at health and safety at one time or another – and some of it does make you smile. Like when you find a bag of cashews with the warning 'This product may contain nuts.' Or a shop meal container that cautions, 'Product may be hot after heating.' Or the notice on an iron saying, 'Do not iron clothes on body.'

We've heard the tales of office loudspeakers saying, 'This is a test to ensure the system is working properly. If you are unable to hear this announcement, please contact us.'

But I'll tell you this: I'd sooner have 'health and safety gone mad' than no health and safety at all. And that goes double for our industry.

The latest available figures show that 173 people died at work during 2011 to 2012. That is exactly 173 too many. With proper attention to safety, I'm sure at least 150 of those who died would have been alive to spend the New Year with their families.

But this year the government is intent on exploiting cynicism about health and safety, and cutting back on protection for employees. As Victoria Phillips says on these pages, it is 'loading the dice against workers' – and in favour of careless employers.

That's why I wanted to start the New Year with us all making a resolution to ensure we do all we can to protect our own safety, and that of our colleagues and passengers.

Below we have a report on what ASLEF safety reps see as the important issues and a more general piece from Victoria about the government's wider intentions. No matter what the cynics say – you can't have enough health and safety. But you don't have to believe me. You could ask the families of the 173 who died ...

Mick Whelan, General Secretary

Government plans Victorian safety standards



Says Victoria Phillips, Head of Employment Rights at Thompsons Solicitors ...

The government is amending health and safety laws to stop working people relying on them for protection from injury, or to claim compensation from their employer. Amendments to the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill will overturn law in place since 1898.

It will mean the end of employers being automatically liable, under the Health and Safety at Work Act, to pay compensation when they have not had an excuse for a worker being injured.

In law this is called 'strict liability' and it happens when employers cannot argue they are not responsible for what happened. For example, when a machine is left unguarded in a factory and someone suffers a traumatic amputation. Or if employers neglect their duty



to keep walkways in workplaces free from hazards. Currently an injured worker doesn't have to prove the employer was at fault for what happened. They simply have to say, 'The law says you should have done this – and you didn't.'

ASSUMING THE EMPLOYER IS RIGHT

The changes the government wants would mean any ASLEF members injured through no fault of their own will only get injury compensation if they can prove that their employer knew (or should have known) that the piece of equipment or working practice was unsafe.

This loads the dice against the worker. Most equipment today is complex and there can be any number of reasons why it may go wrong. It could be down to the employer, the manufacturer, the service company, or anyone who has modified it.

A boss may not themselves have left the hazard on the depot floor or the platform, but they were ultimately responsible for ensuring an accident did not happen. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act, an injured person doesn't have to find out which of them was responsible. Instead, their employer has to show they have complied with their health and safety duties and are not in breach of the regulations.

This requirement provides a better level of protection for employees because it focuses an

employer's attention. Regulations encourage good behaviour.

HEALTH IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Good health and safety should be a priority for employers irrespective of what it costs or the benefits it brings – but it is also good for business. Having employees off sick because they have been injured or made ill by their work is expensive. But the changes the government want will actually encourage irresponsible employers to pay lip-service to health and safety generally.

They also come at a time when court rules are changing, making it more difficult for injured people to find a lawyer to take their compensation claim unless it is going to be very straightforward (see last month's Journal on CICA).

And even if they are able to pursue a claim and win, they may not be able to get back the costs of taking the claim, such as medical reports, even if they were necessary to win the case.

This will do nothing for employer/employee relations. Either people injured through no fault of their own will be put off making a claim because they do not have the requisite knowledge about why they were injured and end up feeling 'hard done by' as a result. Or else the costs and duration of the claim will increase which will not make the employee feel good about their employer either.

We are seeing blow after blow to injured people. ASLEF and Thompsons will work with the TUC, trade unions, health and safety campaigners and Labour MPs to oppose these dangerous amendments and will continue to support injured members.



ASLEF reps say what's important to them



Mick Holder of ASLEF's Health and Safety Department looks at issues our members raised in the TUC's 2012 health and safety reps survey ...

The TUC's tenth biennial health and safety survey was completed for 2012 by 1,875 safety reps from all unions. The hazards they most frequently cited were

- stress
- bullying/harassment
- overwork
- back strains; and
- slips, trips and falls.

The TUC believes many of these result from workers' insecurity resulting from spending cuts and austerity economics.

So what did ASLEF reps say? Their top (or perhaps bottom) ten were:

- stress (77%);
- back strains (74%);
- slips, trips and falls on the level (70%);
- long hours of work (63%);
- noise (60%);

- high temperatures (56%);
- working alone (50%);
- bullying and harassment (49%);
- overwork (49%); and
- violence and threats (49%).

They also mentioned transport accidents, cramped working conditions, repetitive strain injuries, low temperatures, level crossing incidents, suicides, fatigue, broader provision of facilities and seating.

ASLEF reps also reported that 98% of our employers have a written health and safety policy and 86% have not included formal written risk assessments. But, they say, rail companies fall down in involving reps in the risk assessment process – which is required by law. In fact, 37% said they were not involved at all, and the same percentage were involved – but not enough.

They also report a good level of access to occupational health services, 39% in-house and 52% to an external provider.

TRAINING FOR OUR GRADES

The initial training is spot on as 100% of ASLEF safety reps have completed the TUC Stage 1 course. 56% have also completed Stage 2 and 19% hold the TUC Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety

The worrying aspect of training is a reported increase in management refusing time off for training, up to 88% from 64% in the previous survey, despite safety reps having the legal right to be released. However the number saying they couldn't attend because they were too busy at work is down to 12% from 26%,

There's a mixed bag when it comes to managers consulting with ASLEF safety reps on health and safety matters (another legal requirement). Only 32% of reps are consulted automatically, 58% 'only occasionally'.

30% reported being consulted frequently when managers were asked with 70% saying occasionally with



prompting. However 10% are never consulted automatically.

Reps taking up the legal right to inspect the workplace shows some improvement with 65% reporting having inspected three or four times in the previous twelve months and 19% reporting five or more inspections. However 16% had not inspected or only inspected once or twice in that period.

INSPECTIONS

Only 18% of ASLEF reps said their workplace had been inspected in the last three years and 63% said theirs had never been inspected. Even with those inspected, only 24% of reps were told about it before the inspection took place, with the same number saying the inspector had spoken to the rep (which they are required to do).

The effect of the threat of enforcement on employers is unclear with 23% reporting a 'strong' effect and 23% reporting none at all. There was a large increase in the number of employers having had a legal enforcement notice served on them – up to 21% from 2% the previous year. The reps did not usually know, however, what enforcement activity had occurred with their employer or what the effect might be.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE UNION

The results of this survey helps us to focus on what we should be doing in the coming year. These include

- setting out an occupational health, as well as a safety, agenda
- reminding reps of their rights in law to attend training courses and encouraging them to take them up
- taking a firmer line on release for training and inspections
- equipping reps to remind employers of what the law expects of them, and demand they adhere to it
- ensuring employers consult with reps on all matters of health and safety before any action is taken
- make sure reps know how to contact enforcement agencies to identify themselves and requesting contact on any visit.

Finally, a copy of 'Focus on health and safety - TUC biennial survey of safety reps 2012' can be downloaded here at

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/tucfiles/44/SAFETY-REPS-SURVEY-2012.pdf>

Leroy Richards – the man who broke the mould

It's not many years since the idea of someone black sitting in the driving cab of a train was not just unusual. It was resented and begrudged. The common view was that the front of the train was white, the back and the platforms were black. That was how life was. Until Leroy Richards turned up. Chris Proctor went to meet him ...

LEROY RICHARDS was one of the UK's first black train drivers. To get to the footplate, and stay there, was a hard road. He endured prejudice that makes you ashamed to hear and he went through times that would have reduced most of us to desperation. But if you're looking for a victim, you've come to the wrong place. Leroy won. And he did so in his own special way.

He was born in St Kitts in the West Indies and took his first major journey at the age of 16, back in 1964. He travelled alone on a three-week boat voyage to a strange land and an uncertain future, bound for a mysterious place called the Midlands. He was met at Southampton by his father who had gone on ahead and had begun a 34-year career as a railway guard at Saltley. He was excited at the prospect of a new life, not knowing what to expect. Perhaps it was as well that he didn't.

It was a time of prejudice, where he saw signs saying 'No blacks, No Irish' on the doors of boarding-houses and where his first applications for work were rejected out of hand. Undeterred, he secured an apprenticeship and became a qualified electrician. When his company merged with another, the union enforced a 'last in, first out' policy and in 1972 he was redundant. He applied for the same job as his father and



Leroy is greeted by more people in the centre of Birmingham than turn up to City games!

began working for the railway in the signal and telegraph division. 'All I remember about that was the cold!' he says.

Before long, this young man couldn't see why he shouldn't join the footplate grades. After all, he knew he had the necessary skills, personality and aptitudes, as well as his technical qualifications. There was no reason, Leroy thought, that he couldn't become a train driver. Except that he was black.

Every strata of railway society told him that it was not going to happen. Blacks didn't work on the footplate. Full stop. Well, that wasn't for Leroy Richards. Being told firmly that he couldn't be a train driver, he made it his mission to become one.

He found he was facing an uphill struggle. Words of encouragement were as frequent as snow on St Kitts. An instructor, after a faultless session, told him he wouldn't be a driver while he had a head on his shoulders (but not so

well expressed). 'Let's just say I grew accustomed to not being warmly received.'

He had drivers who refused to work with him as a second man and for a while he was left without turns as management colluded with workers to exclude him. 'I just thought, Leroy, you're getting paid. I'm going nowhere.' The windows where staff queued to book on or off looked like apartheid South Africa, as the races separated into grades, with the blacks at the bottom. He was told more than once that he was 'in the wrong queue' when he was a second man.

One of the worse times was when he went for his driving test and found he was out within a half hour, while other, less qualified but white men, continued and passed. Early in 1979 he went back for another shot and it was impossible to reject him again. Leroy smiles wryly as he recalls that the only objection made was the fact that he 'seemed to have a chip on his shoulder'!

He says it felt brilliant when he was passed as a driver, but the prejudice was only beginning. He had guards who refused to work with him, and managers who accepted the situation, finding replacements. There

“ BECAUSE OF HIS COLOUR, LEROY WAS HANDED LUGGAGE TO CARRY WHEN ON THE PLATFORM ”

were drivers who refused to take him out route learning. 'It wasn't like that all the time, of course,' he says. 'The younger drivers I trained with knew me and so accepted me.' But they were in the minority, and new to the industry themselves. 'Yes. It was a lonely place,' he says.

He took regular insults from passengers back in those days too. Because of his colour, he'd be handed luggage to carry when he was on the platform. 'I'd thank them very kindly, tell them I was a driver – and leave.'

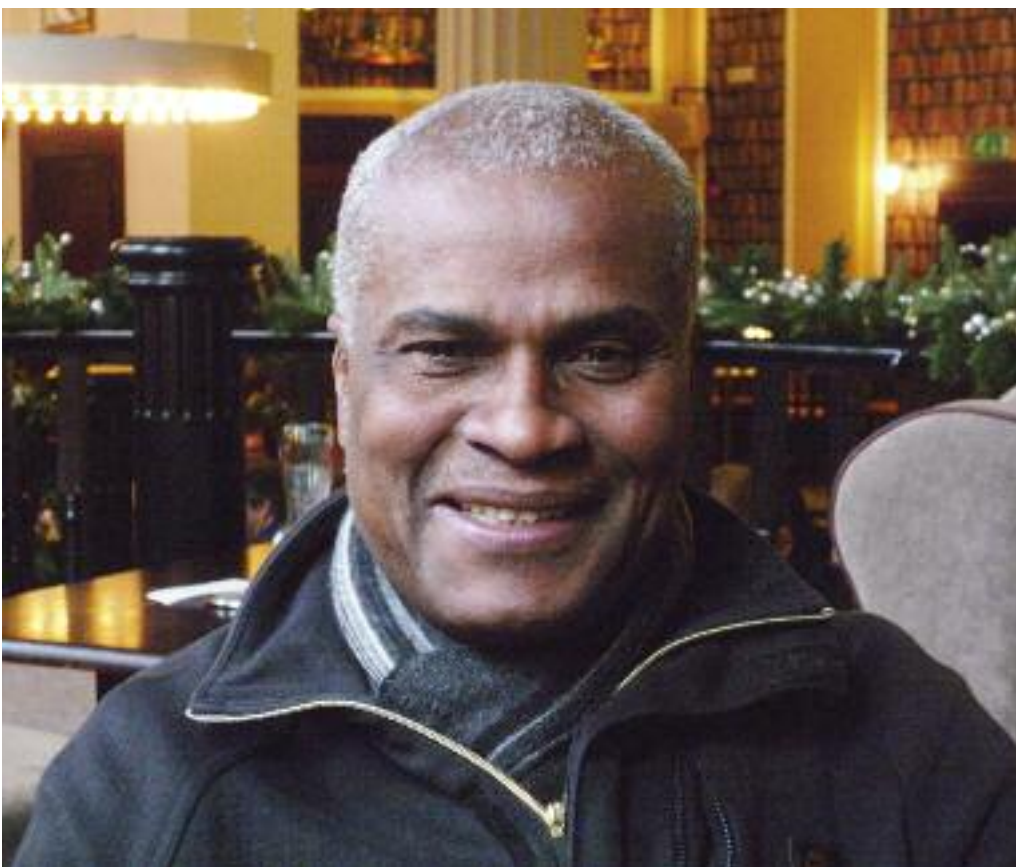
When he began to drive diesels at Birmingham New Street, the situation didn't improve. 'I'd find notes in my locker saying, 'We're watching you,' and there would often be racist slogans written on the walls. And then there was the day he booked off and went to the car park to find his motor has been scraped down the side and a window had been smashed. It had obviously been done by fellow workers, because it was a locked railway park.

So what did Leroy do?

'I went out and I bought myself the flashiest car I could find!' he chuckles. 'I decided if they were going to talk about me, I'd better give them something to talk about! I had to put in a lot of overtime for that car – but it was worth it! Sometimes after a late I'd find someone who



Leroy's journey began in the West Indies, carried on in the UK Midlands – and who knows where it will go next!



Leroy showed pride, dignity and strength in dark days. And throughout it all, his spirits were high and his humour never flagged. He knew he was right.

didn't like me much and I'd offer them a lift home!

'And I blinged myself up. Started wearing gold bracelets and rings and flashy watches.'

He worked on his accent, too. He was going to hold on to his West Indian way of speaking, to show he was proud of his culture and his background. Leroy was determined to be respected for being what he was. He knew his

worth, and it gave him strength.

He laughs as he says he wouldn't turn out for 'their' cricket team, although his father did. 'I wasn't going to join in any stereotyping,' he says.

And was it all terribly hard? Leroy's face creases into a wide grin. 'I used to love it. The fight was on. I wasn't going to hide.'

Far from step back, Leroy stood up. He took

his children to the railway Christmas events where they would be the only black kids eating mince pies and watching old Elvis films. He made sure his whole family travelled on his passes and made a point of calling into Railway Clubs across the land. He wasn't going to be excluded.

'It's all very different today,' he says. 'But there is still institutional racism. Changes to the law have made a difference. You can't treat people the way I was treated, but picking up cash for compensation doesn't do much. Attitudes need to change. It will come.'

The driving force behind Leroy is that he

“ IT FELT BRILLIANT WHEN HE PASSED AS A DRIVER BUT THE PREJUDICE WAS ONLY BEGINNING ”

has always walked proud and tall. Now if you walk along the streets of central Birmingham with him, it's like being out with a local celebrity. He seldom goes more than a few yards without shaking someone's hand – white, black, basic grades, management. It is a triumph of a life.

But old habits die hard. 'I was thinking about all those folk who didn't want me here when I was at a branch meeting that Mick Whelan came to recently. So I asked him what is the position about me staying on until I'm 70?'

He laughs again. These days Leroy does these things to amuse himself. He's a relaxed and confident man – and so he should be. He's had the fight. And he won.

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

While Cameron moves to legalise burglar-bashing, **Nota Bene reported a quite different turn of events in the January 1913 ASLEF Journal ...**

"At one of the London police courts the other day, a question was raised as to whether a bailiff has a right to enter a house without first producing his warrant and stating his business. A certain certified bailiff went to some residence in the West End with a view for levying a distress for rent. As he tried to get inside the premises without disclosing his authority, he was promptly "banged" by the interested parties within. The latter were summoned by the bailiff for assault, but the magistrate dismissed the summons because, as he said, the defendants were fully entitled to exclude the bailiff from the house under the circumstances, and if, as a result, the bailiff received injuries, it was entirely his own fault.

All sensible people will agree with this decision."

Nota Bene also wrote this report on the beginnings of London Transport – the "Underground" combine ...

"With the exception of the Waterloo and City Railway, all the underground lines are to be amalgamated and made into one big system, the capital of which will be over twenty seven million pounds sterling. The tunnels of the City and South London Railway are to be enlarged, and other improvements on different parts of the joint lines will probably be carried out in the course of time. The London United Tramways, the

Metropolitan Electric Tramways and the M.E.T. Omnibus Company, will also amalgamate, forming a triple alliance which will work in close and friendly co-operation with the underground railways. In all this, there is a new and very determined attempt to destroy competition, as in the case of some of the more important "open-air" trunk lines."

The Journal of a century ago also detailed the cost of local government ...

"It is stated that the cost of local government in London is 63s9d per head per annum; whilst in Manchester it is 56s11d; in Leeds 48s9d; in Liverpool 45s5d; in Bristol 43s6d; in Birmingham 43s2d; and in Sheffield 38s8d."

○ Extracts selected and edited by Mick Holder

MARTIN BANFIELD A GREAT LOSS

Faversham Branch has a new comrade smiling down on us from the 'top link'. Brother Martin Banfield was 42 years young when he died suddenly whilst on holiday. We send our heartfelt condolences to Gill, Harry and Tom, family and friends.

Martin lit up every room he walked into with his humour and light-hearted manner. We all miss his beaming and mischievous smile. He was well known across South-Eastern as he worked at Friars Bridge and at the Training Centre at Ashford before getting his driving position at Faversham.

His funeral was held at Bobbing Crematorium on Monday, 12 October and the chapel overflowed with the many, many mourners wishing to show their final respects.

At the wake that followed at the United Services Club, Rainham, we celebrated his memory by raising his favourite tipple, G&T, and reminisced late into the night. We have all promised to make sure there is always 'a large one' on the table at future events to



Martin lit up rooms

commemorate our absent friend.
Steve Gurdler, Secretary, Faversham branch

PETE ('SMARTY') SMART A 50-YEAR OLD SALTLEY SEAGULL

Pete sadly passed away this year after a long battle with lung cancer. We were shocked as we heard in May that Pete was in remission. Sadly Pete's cancer returned with a vengeance and he passed away on 6 September at John Taylor Hospice in Birmingham.

Pete leaves behind his partner Chris, daughter Michelle and son Christopher and his grandchildren. He started on the railway in October 1979 at Saltley depot as a Traction Trainee and passed out as a driver in 1983. His father Jim was also a driver at Saltley.

Pete was excellent at all sports he took part in. He enjoyed playing football for his local pub and for Saltley

Locomotive as a midfielder. He also excelled at boxing, crown green bowling and snooker.

Pete loved Birmingham City football club where he was a season-ticket holder for many years and enjoyed a beer before and after the game with his friends. And he was always cracking old and new jokes with his dry sense of humour

Towards the end of Pete's life he was able to attend his daughter's wedding even though he was very poorly at the time. It meant a lot to Pete.

St Matthew's church in Great Barr Birmingham was full on the day of his funeral, showing the love and respect that everyone had for Pete.



After the funeral his family, friends and colleagues went to Pete's local - the Drakes Drum - and celebrated his life.

Pete will be sadly missed by all his family, friends, work colleagues and football fans alike. Keep right onto the end of the road, Pete. You are a legend.

Adrian Harnett, Secretary, Saltley Branch

All spruce at the Spa!

The Leamington Spa branch held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Sunday 2 December, and we were very pleased to be joined by Dave Calfe, our national executive committee member, Bob Earlam of the London Midland Drivers' Company Council, and Phil Spice, Roy Woodward and Vic Waite from the Retired Members Section.

After the usual AGM activities were concluded, we invited our visitors to say a few words.

Dave spoke first and in his address he touched on the rumbling disputes in DB Schenker and on London Underground (concerning the Boxing Day service), ASLEF's view of the McNulty Report, the West Coast re-franchising debacle, changes in the laws regarding Employment Tribunals and the loss of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Arrangements.

Bob Earlam introduced himself to all, having recently taken up a new role on the London Midland Drivers' Company Council, and was pleased to answer the branch's questions on what has transpired within the company over the last few months.

Then it was time to hear from the 'Good Old Boys' of the Retired Section. We are always very happy to hear what they have been up to over the past year. They told us about the problems retired members often face at booking offices when trying to reserve a seat with their free passes before speaking of the passing of Brother Jack Millington a year ago. Sam Reed also brought members up to date on the progress towards the Dedication Service at the National Arboretum. There were also reports on the Retired Section AGM with a special buffet lunch held in August. The Section's Christmas Party was on 19 December.

All of us at Leamington Spa branch would like to take this opportunity to say 'Thank you' to all the ASLEF officers who took time out on their Sundays to come and visit us. We are only a small branch, so the fact that people put themselves out like this for us is very much appreciated!

Best wishes for the new year.

Nick Walker, Reporter, Leamington Spa Branch



RON JUDD PASSED ON AT AGE 71

Ron Judd started his career in 1956 as a cleaner at Boston and became one of the 'nomad' men during the many years he spent working for the railway. There were many people in those days that no one seemed to be quite sure which depot they were working out of!

I believe that Ron moved about seven times, and eventually he arrived at Kings Cross where he finished his railway career. He often used to tell us about the time he fired the Cathedral Express Flying Scotsman from

Peterborough and that it had been shown on Pathe News.

Ron was born on the 5 Dec 1940 and was buried on 5 December last year. It would have been his 72nd birthday.

Ron will be sadly missed by the Wednesday Club, the little social event where 'the lads' meet every week at the Wetherspoon's in Peterborough. His old friends and colleagues did him proud with the numbers who turned out to celebrate Ron's life and offer what support they could to his family at his funeral. May he rest in peace.

Peter Smith, Reporter, Retired Members Section



Group discussions, with author Susan just in the picture

Retired Members Forum

Over the weekend of 9 – 11 November I spent a most entertaining and informative time at the retired members' forum held at Low Hall, Scalby, just outside Scarborough.

On the Friday we were entertained by none other than Mick Whelan, ASLEF's General Secretary and Simon Weller, the union's National Organiser and the EC President Alan Donnelly. They spoke about franchises and renationalisation and how the union is working to get people with genuine workplace experience into Parliament as MPs.

Why would these people spend their valuable time speaking to retired members? It is because we have years of experience behind us which was a valuable resource during the question and answer session that followed.

For Helen Tomlin from Thompsons solicitors who came to talk to us on Saturday morning, it was a little different as we were the target audience for what she had to say. She spoke to us about asbestosis, the gestation period for asbestos-related diseases (which could be 30 to 40 years).

Helen clearly knew her subject and spoke using as little jargon as possible and in the question and answer session that followed she was able to answer every question put to her fully and without any hesitation.

On Sunday morning it was the turn of Tosh McDonald, the EC member for the Yorkshire area, who spoke about ASLEF and its role in winning Labour back to its

former left-of-centre stance, and what had been accomplished so far.

This annual forum is always of a high standard not only with the speakers who attend but also the venue itself which is comfortable and welcoming as are the staff. By the way, the food is very good and plentiful as well! I would recommend attending this forum to any retired members interested in having their voice heard.

Susan Howe, Retired Member



Bill Ronksley with RMS reporter P. J. Smith



Mick Whelan with Section Chair Ray Jackson



Our retired members out in force!

Upcoming events

WEEKEND SCHOOL DISTRICT 5 – 23/24 FEBRUARY

District 5 is holding a Weekend School on 23 and 24 February at the Arundel House Hotel in Cambridge. The subsidised price of £75 includes buffet lunch, evening meal and bed and breakfast.

Speakers will include general secretary Mick Whelan, ASLEF General Secretary and top-level speakers from Thompsons solicitors, Justice for Colombia, the Labour Party and the TUC with others still to be confirmed. For details please contact Nigel Gibson by email at ngibson@aslef.org.uk or by phone on 0788 675 4069.

EASTLEIGH REUNION – 9 MARCH

The Eastleigh Reunion will be held at the old BRSA club on 9 March from noon until 18:00. All welcome. Free buffet.

BRIGHTON & SUSSEX REUNION FOR 2013 – 7 MAY

An informal open afternoon will be held for all retired and working members with a connection to Brighton and Sussex Motive Power Depots in the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont (off Dyke Road) from 14:00 on Tuesday 7 May 2013. Further details from Paul Edwards (07402 478 2780 or Paul Horan (07868 757 492).

WANTED



WOMEN MEMBERS

interested in being sponsored to attend conferences as visitors

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UPCOMING CONFERENCES INCLUDE the unions annual conference, TUC womens conference, labour party and TUC congress

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Two members from Tyne and Wear Metro have retired after 40 years combined service in the rail industry. Gary Donkin (seen here with wife Kay) and Bob Murray enjoyed a joint leaving party last month, reports branch secretary Trevor Graham

Gills reunited

First in last out! Gillingham held their 2012 reunion at the Railway Club at Rainham on 4 October 2012. I'd like to thank the team that arranged the event, and who made sure none of us went home hungry. Thanks also to the staff of the Social Club for their hospitality. It was nice to see retired members who had worked at various depots on the Southern and were able to get to the event.

Put these dates into your diary for later in the year:

- 10 January at Ashford
- 4 April at Ramsgate
- 4 July at Tonbridge
- 3 October at Rainham.

Peter Smith, Reporter, Retired Members Section



Mick Woods, Dave Weddle, Ray Cooper and Bill Collins at the Gillingham reunion

Meeting our Waterloo

Alan Taylor and myself represented the Retired Members Section (RMS) committee at a meeting of the Waterloo & Nine Elms branch on Guy Fawkes night, having received an invitation from Steve Richardson (Branch Secretary).

Branch Chair Marz Colombini made us all welcome and invited the general secretary to address the branch. Mick Whelan gave a full and frank insight on where ASLEF was now, and where he hoped to see us go in the future. Branch members gave their views and asked questions which Mick answered with honest conviction.



Long and respected service honoured at Waterloo branch

The Chair then invited Mick to present retired members Bro Ian Turner and Bro Bob Parker with 50-year medallions, and Bro John Wardle with his 45 year badge: a total of 145 years of loyal ASLEF membership!

It was also pleasing to see RMS member Frank Holloway

in attendance at the branch meeting. There was also an election for a reserve LLR rep - so branch meetings are the place to be for up-to-date information, and to socialise and share experiences with your colleagues.

Peter Smith, Reporter, RMS

Letters



66 means dirty-first century!

We're nearly into 2013 now - but Class 66 cabs are still in the 'dirty-first' century.

Despite several requests to get them cleaned, nothing is done. We get home covered in coal, silicon, gypsum, limestone and - now the rubber mats are worn out - rubber dust.

In this day and age this is deplorable. Can our union please help? As one chap said, 'Dirt spreads/harbours germs'. Add to that our weakened immune system due to constant changes to our work patterns and it's a wonder more of us are not off sick.

You get off a 66, shake your jacket and watch as clouds of dust fly into the air, highly visible on a sunny day.

And then there is the disturbance that is caused by the heater outlet being low down and blowing towards the DSD pedal, and then upwards towards us. Not to mention the vibration and rough riding.

I report this in the repair books on a regular basis - and nothing's done. I think nobody is booked or has the equipment to do it.

I can appreciate the nature of our work is dusty but a car air filter gets cleaned more often in dusty conditions. So surely cabs should get the same? After all, at last week's branch meeting someone said, 'We're professionals, so let's have a working environment befitting our status.'

One day, lord forbid, some poor driver is

going to get a sneezing fit and SPAD. Don't mock. I know one such unfortunate driver.

Finally - well done last month's scribe, Robin Vaughan, writing about these deplorable cabs. I'm pleased it's not just me that reports them!

Apart from that lets all hope 2013 brings us all good health and happiness.

Phil Garner, Assistant Secretary, Knottingly branch

Criminal to ignore injuries

I'm seething at the changes this government are making. Kicking down the working class and the unemployed seems to be an enjoyable pastime for these mega-rich self-righteous scum. I read in the December Journal that we no longer have the back-up of Criminal Injuries compensation when we suffer injuries at work.

I suffered the experience of an accident some years ago that involved a young man who by misadventure went under the train I was driving. I had several weeks off work, and having a young family at the time, I was grateful for the compensation I received.

It is pretty obvious that things in this country are going to get worse until we oust this government, that is lining its own - and its mates' - pockets while it can.

Would it be possible for us to set up a fund to help drivers who need financial help during hardship caused by injuries that are no longer

(Continued on page 20)



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street London, EC1M 4NN** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER** feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!



(Continued from page 19)

covered by the Criminal Injuries board? A message could be added to each drivers' pay slip asking them to make a payment of say, £1 a week to help in the instances of these injuries.

Maybe we won't get the kind of help the criminal injuries paid - but it would go some way to helping those who need it most at the worst of times.

I'm sure ASLEF has the resources and know-how to set up a scheme that benefits us all.

Paul Davies, Driver, Manchester Piccadilly

Thanks for top representation

May I through your pages convey my thanks to my local LDC reps and to Nigel Cummins (SWT Company Council) for all the hard work they put in for my recent Drivers Competency Panel Hearing.

I have been in the unfortunate position of having a number of Safety on the Line incidents in the past two years and my local depot manager wanted me permanently removed from driving. Without the hard work of ASLEF reps, I would now be looking for employment away from the driving grade.

No matter how some members may moan about the cost of their subscriptions, this union is there when you need it most. What price subscriptions against a well-paid job?

Once again a massive thank you to all concerned.

Colin Deere, Driver, Portsmouth Branch

Champagne Perry!

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Perry Calvert for all his hard work on Southeastern DCC. Perry was one of the main reasons I became an LDR - I hope to get even with him someday!

His advice and support, whether in person or at the end of a phone, has been invaluable, along with his in-depth knowledge of DRI and other union issues. You will be sorely missed, Perry. All the very best for the future.

Congratulations to A. Hussein, B. Williams

SMOOTH SUITS AND GROWING APATHY

A pat on the back for Tosh Macdonald for stating (December Journal) what many of us feel about the individuals who make up the Labour Party at national level.

All the political parties are full of identikit, suit-wearing, image-conscious people who are all desperate to connect with 'Middle England' or 'Mondeo Man' as it used to be called.

Too many Labour MPs don't come into politics to make a difference or improve the lives of the working classes. Often they are attracted by the idea of a good career which can lead to many more opportunities to make money or promote themselves.

Like many other drivers, I can recall walking into mess rooms at numerous locations and having heated debates about politics and politicians that

sometimes came close to blows.

Nowadays nobody discusses issues that affect all of us because they see politicians of all parties are being 'all the same, in it for themselves' - which leads to the attitude that 'it doesn't matter who you vote for'.

This is sad for the UK - and tragic for democracy as a whole.

Labour needs to grasp the nettle before it's too late and make some drastic changes. There must be a place for honest working class individuals and men of principle such as Dennis Skinner and Tony Benn.

We want politicians who listen to their local communities - and don't rely on focus groups, lobbyists and advisors to tell them what to say and think.

Steve Harris, Driver, Plymouth

and S. Burgess on your election and re-election to the DCC.

Trevor Mitchell, Tonbridge LDR

Memorabilia sharks prey on rail widows

I want to alert members to the fact that there are people who earn a dishonest crust cashing in on railway widows.

I recently organised the sale of a collection of rail memorabilia for the widow of a former colleague which raised almost £6,000. She told me afterwards that an auction house had been to see it before I became involved - and had offered her just half of this amount. She had also had the items 'valued' by an 'expert' who advertises in the railway press. He had offered her just over £4,000.

I hate to think of widows being taken for a ride in this way, and I've decided to do something about it. For any relative, I'm offering to arrange viewings, estimates, collection, delivery to the best auctions and prompt payment with all paperwork, including a catalogue prior to the auction. I can be

contacted at mel.thorley@gmail.com Let's keep these sales 'in-house'!

Mel Thorley, retired driver

Penzance to jobs end

I have recently retired from the railway and I'd like to thank you all for the comradeship and banter I have enjoyed whilst I was a train driver and an ASLEF member.

I will always look back with fond memories of my fellow drivers at Penzance and Plymouth.

A special thanks must go to Mr D. Samuels, whose advice and help was invaluable when I was taken off driving a few years ago because of ill health.

Good luck to you all!

Brian Greenwood, retired driver

Precisely!

Just a couple of small picky points after reading the December Journal.

The Tube and the Underground are two different beasts. The line running from

Paddington to Farringdon is part of the Underground. It uses sub-surface stock, not Tube stock. The A60 trains are not Tube trains, they would not fit in a Tube tunnel, and the new S class trains are not going to be used on the Tube as they too are far too large for a Tube tunnel.

The first Tube line was the City and South London Railway, now a part of the Northern Line. The Tube lines in London are the Northern, the Piccadilly, the Central, the Bakerloo, the Jubilee, the Victoria and the Waterloo & City. The District, the Hammersmith & City, the Circle and the Metropolitan lines are all sub-surface lines, not Tube.

The whole lot is designated The Underground.

Graham Martin-Royle, Hastings

Freight standards

John Mullen is 100% right in what he said about freight drivers' personal standards in the November Journal. Our working standards are slowly disappearing.

Look for example at two ASLEF campaigns - SQUASH and free travel for unprotected Staff.

ASLEF has made the odd token noise to the freight companies about putting in 'nice bouncy seats' and air-conditioning, but to date only the odd loco can boast such luxuries.

Month on month we see letters in the Journal from TOC drivers regarding free travel. They're lucky they get anything. Unprotected FOC drivers get no travel facilities at all, to the point that they pay to travel to and from work.

Even protected FOC drivers who receive the benefit are taxed on it because there is no reciprocal agreement between FOC/TOCs on travel.

We appreciate these campaigns will not be concluded overnight, but these subjects have been on-going for some considerable time. We hear odd noise in the Journal and circulars, but 'talk is cheap'. We want results.

If this letter offends I make no apology, as it contains the truth as far as I'm concerned.

Kevin Drake, Driver, Freightliner Intermodel, Eastleigh

Mullen it over

It was very disappointing to read John Mullen's letter in the November Journal about freight drivers' personal standards. I had hoped that things in the freight sector might have improved, but sadly after reading John's letter I see that little has changed in the four years since I left the job.

We came on the railway to become train drivers not the 'Jack of all trades and master of none' that the freight companies have imposed on us. And the flexibility in rostering makes our 1982 dispute look like a storm in a tea cup!

Here's hoping that our great and proud union can reverse the damage that has been

POPPY BADGES RAISED £1,416

I had an advert in recent Journals on this page selling ASLEF poppy badges to raise money for the Royal British Legion. It's been taken out for the best reason that they've all been sold, having raised £1,416.

I'd like to thank all of you who supported the appeal for a great charity which I am sure is close to most peoples' hearts in one way or another.

I enclose a picture of myself presenting the cheque to Bill Yallop, the RBL Poppy Appeal Organiser. I hope to produce another badge next year

Thanks once again for your kind-hearted support.

Trevor Southgate, Ipswich



done since privatisation, especially as employment conditions off the railway are very bad indeed.

Gordon Young, retired member, Warrington

Thanks to ASLEF - I'm back!

I would like to take the opportunity to offer my sincere thanks to ASLEF and in particular to Mr. S. Moran, Mr. B. Corbett and Mr. N Houston of Reading LDC as well as all ASLEF members in all FGW depots who supported me in a recent fracas with FGW which resulted in my dismissal and subsequent re-instatement.

The support, time and professionalism shown by ASLEF right from the outset was amazing and I would say to anyone that being a member of ASLEF is as important to a driver as having a pair of eyes to drive with! Never have I been more aware of the truth of the phrase 'Divided we fall'!

Thanks are also owed for all the kind messages received from colleagues and friends in Reading Depot since my reinstatement.

Jon Heyworth, Driver, Reading

Shift backing at Norwich

A year ago I was diagnosed with a serious illness, and medical advice was that I reduce my hours of work, and work a fixed shift. I approached my employers, Great Anglia, with this request, and was supported by my local LDC at Norwich.

I am grateful that GA has now allowed me to make these changes, and I am sure that the support of the union was a major factor in this success.

I would like to thank the Norwich LDC for their support, and particularly Lee Turner for his tireless help over many stressful months, without which I probably wouldn't have remained in the driving grade.

Jim Carter, Driver, Norwich

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07767077907 or motherwellbs@aslef.org.uk



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ENGRAVING: ASLEF driver based in Sunderland branch offers professional engraving at reasonable prices. I can engrave anything you wish, such as the ASLEF logo on a pint tankard which is pictured. For further details contact Paul Potts by email at ppotts1969@hotmail.co.uk.

Tube driver vote - Boxing Day

As this Journal goes to press, negotiations are still going on about a possible strike of our London Tube members on Boxing Day.

We are seeking two reasonable assurances: that working on this day will be voluntary, and that those who do attend will be adequately compensated. It is beyond my belief that management cannot make an offer that achieves these points – and has failed to do so for the past two years.

I'd like to thank our members on the Tube for giving us a ballot result of over 90% for industrial action. It strengthens our negotiating position by demonstrating very clearly the strength of feeling on this issue.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary

Thanks ASLEF

I'd like to thank ASLEF and its members throughout Scotrail, but especially the staff at Aberdeen, for the help, encouragement, friendship and outstanding support they have shown, not only to me but to my family during what has been a very dark time for us. Thank you.

Paul Breen, Aberdeen

Scalby success

As a member of the union's retired members' section since 2009, I was fortunate enough and very grateful to be selected to attend its annual weekend forum at Scalby.

We all had a marvellous time and the hospitality was great. It was very interesting and informative regarding the union's activities and there was the opportunity for all of us to give our views on each report.

This year we were honoured by the attendance of Mick Whelan, the general secretary, the union president Alan Donnelly, the vice-president Tosh McDonald and National Organiser Simon Weller. In short, we had the Full Monty!

I thought the contribution of the Thompson solicitor Helen Tomlin was particularly useful. She gave an in-depth analysis of the causes of various asbestos-related illnesses that can be caused by being in contact with it in our duties.

Attending an event like this brought old comrades together from all parts of the country and I would certainly recommend those retired members to apply to attend next year's event. They will be guaranteed a fruitful and interesting weekend.

I'd like to thank all members of the Retired Members' Section committee for organising such a fabulous weekend and for their dedication throughout the rest of

DAS IS DROSS WITH DISTRACTIONS

My work colleague Robin Vaughan has performed a most salutary service to his fellow drivers in reminding us of the unresolved cab environment issues in respect of the Class 66 locomotive (December Journal).

However I feel he has not gone far enough in highlighting the problems faced by Freightliner drivers with these machines, especially with regard to the imminent introduction of some pretty dubious new technology on them. I hope Robin will forgive me if I take up where he left off last month.

Freightliner is currently installing a Driver Advisory System (DAS) in all Class 66s. This is not an essential safety system, but rather a highly expensive, overly prescriptive piece of high-tech gadgetry designed to mitigate the financial penalties incurred through late running of the train.

The device uses GPS to calculate the speed necessary to reach the next time control point along the route on time without a penalty, and feeds this back to the driver display

unit on board the loco, with regular updates.

Given this is a system designed with a purely commercial interest and given the intensely interactive nature of the equipment with the driver, my own reaction is that this will present a very real danger of seriously distracting the driver from his principal task, which is to ensure the safe conduct of his train.

I think it would be highly desirable to enact some form of statutory legislation prohibiting TOCs and FOCs from introducing anything into the cab other than essential safety systems. The cab is already well subscribed with many safeguards such as AWS, TPWS, DSD, Vigilance and penalty brake applications.

I find it extraordinary the Freightliner has so doggedly resisted paying the relatively modest sums that would be needed to make 66 cabs more user-friendly, but don't hesitate a moment before shelling out on a multi-million pound in-cab system on that very same locomotive whose only aim is to 'beat



the system'. It is a classic case of mistaken priorities and throwing away good money after bad.

I realise the company has a legitimate interest in avoiding financial penalties if it is to prosper, but I most emphatically deny that this DAS 'initiative' is a valid way forward.

If Freightliner is serious in wishing to save money, perhaps it should unite with ASLEF and all the other TOCs and FOCs by putting pressure on the government to finally abolish the ridiculous, arbitrary, punitive financial penalty system that currently exists between Network Rail and the operating companies, and which has so seriously handicapped the efficient running of the railway since privatisation.

Hugh Potton, Driver, Eastleigh

the year. Such an event is helped financially by the 500 Club and I urge not only retired but serving members to take part in it.
Bob Thatcher, retired member, Ilford

Worthwhile retired forum

Once again I had the privilege of attending the ASLEF Retired Members' Weekend Forum at Scalby in November and I had the honour of escorting the oldest driver to attend. Matty Daley is from Hartlepool, as I am. Matty is a young 92 while I am a mere whipper-snapper of 67!

The highlights for me were speeches by Mick Whelan and a passionate speech without

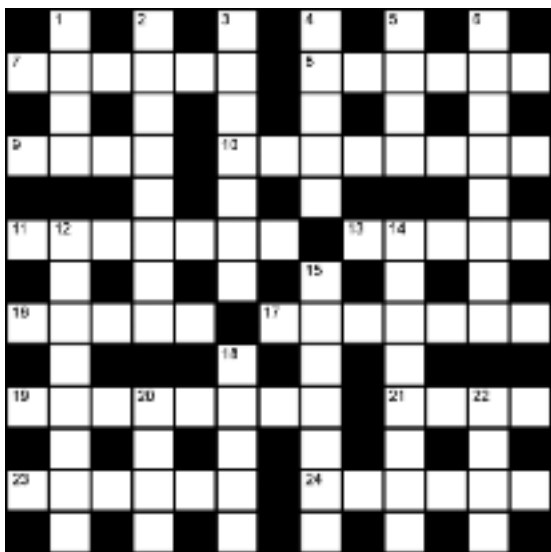
notes by Bill Ronksley - a long time servant of ASLEF. I would also mention a valuable talk by a solicitor from Thompsons, Helen Tomlin, on asbestos related illness. We can all recall playing with the stuff when we were cleaners!

The social side of the forum was excellent with pleasant staff, lovely food and a very late opening bar.

M Joyce, retired driver, Thonaby



Prize Crossword No. 81 set by Zebedee



Solution to prize crossword No 80 which appeared in the December 2012 edition of the ASLEF Journal

Congratulations to **Chris Leeks**, from **Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk**

Across: 1 Slash 7 Customer 8 Extol 10 Widespread 12 Saucepan 14 Buoy 16 Bull 17 Vermouth 20 Inflatable 23 Evict 24 Guernsey 25 Anger.

Down: 1 Spears 2 Show 3 Mute 4 Steps 5 Impetuous 6 Friday 9 Liver 11 Qualified 13 Ape 15 Amble 16 Bridge 18 Hooter 19 Banns 21 Anew 22 Even.

Across

7 Cup holder, sometimes seen flying? (6)

8 Irritates (6)

9 Pile (4)

10 Goodbye (8)

11 The quality of being able to perform (7)

13 Babes to the slaughter? (5)

16 Thoughts (5)

17 Railway track supporters (7)

19 An open clash (8)

21 Crop (4)

23 Polished surface (6)

24 Soak up (6)

Down

1 Metal store for valuables (4)

2 Singing without music (1,7)

3 Money remaining after paying business costs (7)

4 Espouse (5)

5 Had the knowledge (4)

6 A unit of spoken language, spoken as 2! (8)

12 Sleeping places at

home (8)

14 Pub (3,5)

15 Flat area on top of hills (7)

18 Number (5)

20 Comestibles, eats, grub, nosh (4)

22 Wear out (4).



The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

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Thanks for all your responses to the 80th ASLEF crossword in the December edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.

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